

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 11534

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJ: MICHEL JOBERT ON FRENCH POLITICS

SUMMARY. DCM CALLED ON FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER TURNED POLITICIAN MICHEL JOBERT APRIL 20. IN ADDITION TO LENGTHY COMMENTS IN SEMI-PHILOSOPHICAL TONES ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION, WHICH HE FINDS TROUBLESOME TODAY AND FRAUGHT WITH RISKS FOR THE FUTURE, JOBERT MUSED WITH NOSTALGIA AND A CERTAIN WARMTH ON HIS EARLIER CONTACTS WITH THE SECRETARY AND OTHER US OFFICIALS. ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GISCARD'S GOVERNMENT, HE WAS DISCOURAGED, CRITICIZING THE PRESIDENT FOR A LACK OF VISION, DECISION AND LEADERSHIP. JOBERT WILL BE TRAVELLING TO THE US IN JULY AND AUGUST TO COVER THE TWO CONVENTIONS FOR A RADIO STATION. END SUMMARY.

1. "THE NECESSITY TO BE UNPOPULAR": IN JOBERT'S VIEW, GISCARD MUST, FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY, BE MORE DECISIVE AND MORE OF A LEADER. FRANCE CANNOT CONTINUE
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ON HALF MEASURES, WITHOUT THE RISK OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL

AND EVEN MILITARY UNREST -- A RISK WHICH MUST BE TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY IN A COUNTRY SPLIT POLITICALLY ALMOST ENTIRELY IN HALF. WHAT IS NEEDED, JOBERT SAID, IS A PRESIDENT WHO WILL DECIDE THE MAIN ORIENTATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES, CARRY THEM OUT VIGOROUSLY AND PERIODICALLY REPORT THE RESULTS BACK TO THE PEOPLE. WHAT KIND OF POLICIES? THOSE WHICH ARE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF FRANCE, NOT A BONE HERE AND THERE IN THE HOPES -- VAIN SO FAR -- OF ENLARGING THE GOVERNING MAJORITY, OR HESITATIONS WHOSE PURPOSE -- SO FAR UNFULFILLED -- IS NOT TO OFFEND ANYONE. SUCH A COURSE MAY WELL REQUIRE BEING UNPOPULAR WITH EVEN A MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE, ESPECIALLY IN THE SHORT-TERM. BUT IN THE LONGER TERM, IT IS THE ONLY HONORABLE COURSE TO FOLLOW.

2. "DESPERATE BUT NOT HOPELESS": AFTER DESCRIBING THIS TROUBLED PICTURE OF FRANCE OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS, JOBERT CONCLUDED THAT ALL IS NOT LOST -- AGAIN REFERRING TO FRANCE MORE THAN GISCARD. A LARGER PART OF THE POPULATION IS CAPABLE OF RALLYING TOGETHER TOWARD COMMON GOALS. JOBERT DEPLORED THE FACT THAT THE SYSTEM IS SUCH THAT 49.2 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE (MITTERRAND'S ELECTORATE IN 1974) IS SYSTEMATICALLY EXCLUDED FROM PARTICIPATING IN GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMUNIST ONE-FIFTH OF THE ELECTORATE IS REGARDED AS A POLITICAL PARIAH. SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE UNDER DE GAULLE AND POMPIDOU, AND NEED NOT BE THE CASE NOW OR IN THE FUTURE. WITH RESPECT TO FUTURE ELECTIONS, JOBERT PREDICTED OPPOSITION GAINS IN THE MUNICIPALS IN 1977 BUT WOULD NOT VENTURE A PREDICTION ON THE 1978 LEGISLATIVES. DESPITE THE GROWING PS/PC POPULARITY, MUCH DEPENDS, HE SAID, ON THE ECONOMY AND OUTSIDE FACTORS: WHETHER THE PCI COMES TO POWER IN ITALY AND DEMONSTRATES IT CAN GOVERN RESPONSIBLY; WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION PLAYS A HEAVY HAND IN YUGOSLAVIA AFTER TITO; AND FINALLY, HOW THE US EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN ABOUT PC PARTICIPATION IN ITALY AND FRANCE (JOBERT FELT PUBLIC STATEMENTS WORK AGAINST US INTERESTS BECAUSE OF THE CLEVER USE THE PC MAKES OF THEM). IN SUM, JOBERT FELT THE FUTURE OF

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FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS COULD BE FAVORABLY AFFECTED BY PRESIDENTIAL COURAGE, BUT THAT DESPITE GISCARD'S BEST EFFORTS, CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY WOULD STILL REMAIN -- FOR EXTERNAL AS WELL AS INTERNAL REASONS.

3. FUTURE OF THE MOUVEMENT DES DEMOCRATES: DESPITE THE MOUVEMENT DES DEMOCRATES' POOR SHOWING IN THE CANTONALS LAST MONTH AND THE DROP IN PUBLIC INTEREST IN HIS

MOVEMENT, JOBERT GAVE EVERY INDICATION OF INTENDING TO CONTINUE. HE EXPLAINED MARCH'S RESULTS, WHERE ONLY A HANDFUL OF HIS 53 CANDIDATES WON, BY DISAVOWING ANY REAL INTENTION TO RUN CANDIDATES IN LOCAL ELECTIONS. EVEN SO, HIS CANDIDATES WON AN AVERAGE OF 9 PERCENT OF THE VOTE WHERE THEY DID RUN, A FIGURE HE CONSIDERED QUITE RESPECTABLE. JOBERT EXPLAINED THAT HIS PLAN 20 MONTHS AGO WHEN HE BEGAN HIS MOVEMENT WAS TO PLAY A ROLE IN TIGHT RACES, A REASONABLE TACTIC WHERE SO MANY ELECTIONS ARE NEAR THE 50-50 BREAK. JOBERT SAID HE HOPES TO PLAY THIS SWING ROLE IN ABOUT 50 LEGISLATIVE SEATS IN 1978, AND HE CONSIDERED HIS 9 PERCENT VOTING POLL LAST MONTH ENCOURAGING IN THIS SENSE.

4. VISIT TO US: JOBERT WILL BE VISITING THE US IN JULY AND AUGUST AS PART OF A RADIO TEAM FROM EUROPE NO. 1 TO COVER THE CONVENTIONS. HIS PARTICULAR ROLE WILL BE TO ADD COMMENTARIES AND POLITICAL MOOD-SETTERS TO THE NEWS REPORTING. DURING HIS SECOND VISIT IN AUGUST, HE PLANS TO STAY A FEW EXTRA DAYS AFTER THE CONVENTION TO CONTACT POLITICAL FIGURES AND FRIENDS. HE WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH DAVID ROCKEFELLER AND WOULD OBVIOUSLY RELISH A CHANCE TO SEE THE SECRETARY, BUT HE WOULD NEVER ASK FOR AN APPOINTMENT.
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